To the Chairman and Members of the Peterefield
Urban District Council

Gentlemen

During the year 1897. 66 Births and 56 Deaths were registered in the Urban District of Peterefield. In 1896 the Births numbered 74 the Deaths 63. Estimating the population at 3110 the Births were equivalent to an annual birth rate of 21·2 per thousand, the mean birth rate of the Urban District since its formation in 1893 being 23·69 per thousand, and that of England and Wales during the last fifty years 33·8 per thousand. The deaths were equivalent to an annual death rate of 18 per thousand but of the 56 Deaths registered in the District, 10 were of persons not belonging thereto, 8 of these occurring in the Union Infirmary and 2 in the Cottage Hospital. Deducting these we get a corrected death rate of 14·8 per thousand. The mean death rate for the five years 1893-97 was 17·8 per thousand, the mean corrected death rate for the same period 13·94 per thousand. The mean annual death rate of England and Wales in the seven years 1889-95 was 18·8 per thousand. Of the 56 deaths registered in the District 17 occurred in persons over 70 years of age, seven of whom had exceeded 80 years. The deaths under one year of age numbered 5 and were equivalent to an annual death rate of 72·4 per thousand births registered. During the last five years the mean annual death rate under one year has been 92 per thousand births, the corresponding rate of mortality in England and Wales being 148. The deaths under 5 years of age were 11. This low death rate is satisfactory since the mortality among infants and children may be taken as a fair criterion of the sanitary condition of a district, still it is probable that it might be further diminished. 52 deaths have occurred in children under 5 years of age since the

formation of the Urban District. Of these 13 have been attributed to Convulsions and Atrophy, 7 to Measles 6 to Whooping Cough and 4 to Diphtheria. Convulsions and Atrophy are in the majority of cases due to improper feeding, and we must look to the diffusion of sounder knowledge with respect to the rearing of infants to diminish the mortality from this cause

Efforts have been made to reduce the mortality from Scarlet Fever, Typhoid and Diphtheria by compulsory notification and by provision of Isolation Hospitals, and these efforts have been rewarded with an encouraging amount of success, at least in the case of the first two diseases. Practically nothing has been done to lessen the mortality from Measles and Whooping Cough to which Diseases one fourth of the deaths under five years of age in this District have been due. I would again urge the desirability of including these among the notifiable diseases. Against this it may be argued that these diseases are highly infectious before their true character is known and that therefore the mischief is done and the disease spread before the Sanitary Authority is aware of its existence. This is true of first cases but it makes it the more important that the Authority should get an early knowledge of these, so that the patient and members of the family may be kept from school and public places of resort until danger of carrying the infection to others has passed away. Moreover compulsory notification of Measles and Whooping Cough would help to dispel the popular fallacies that they are trivial ailments; that every person must contract them at some period of life; and that therefore it is useless to take precautions against infection.

Four deaths have been attributed to Influenza. No deaths have been caused by other Zymotic diseases. One death was due to chronic alcoholism.

During the past year measures have been taken with the object of improving the character of the water supplied to the Town. This, though organically pure, has been hitherto

April 9 1898

FAIRLEY,
PETERSFIELD.

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brownish in colour and turbid from the presence of mineral matters in suspension. The reservoir, in which it was stored, held only 117000 gallons, or little more than two days consumption there was consequently not sufficient time for subsidence of suspended matters. A second Reservoir has now been constructed by the side of the original one capable of holding 190000 gallons and the water for the supply of the Town is taken from one or the other alternately. Floating arms have also been connected with the delivery pipes so that the water is drawn from the upper instead of as hitherto the lower part of the reservoirs.

The quality of the water has been materially improved by these means, but still it is not entirely free from colour or sediment. The question of filtration has, I understand, been considered by the Council. Undoubtedly this would render the water unexceptionable in quality, but it is open to question whether the application of Clark's process would not be less costly. By the latter process all suspended matters are precipitated, carrying with them the greater part of any organisms which may have been originally present. It should not be forgotten that the saving to householders by using water softened by this method is by no means inconsiderable. The London and North Western Railway Co. use this system at various depôts for the purpose of avoiding the incrustation of their engine boilers, and those who have had experience of kitchen boilers and hot water pipes in this Town will know that the damage to these from deposit of lime salts and iron is considerable. This process (or modifications of it) are in use in a large number of places - Henley, Southampton, Strood, Canterbury, Caterham, Ewing &c, and it would be well perhaps to obtain some further information on the subject before deciding the matter. It would be advisable to cover the new Reservoir as leaves sand dust &c are blown into the water by high winds, and there is also risk of more serious contamination in its present exposed condition

The joint Committee appointed in December 1896 by the Urban and Rural District Councils to consider what steps should be taken for providing an Isolation Hospital held several meetings during the past year. In accordance with their recommendations a suitable site of four acres well removed from dwelling houses has been acquired on Petersfield Heath between the Midhurst Railway and the Sandy Lane. Plans for an Isolation Hospital to accommodate twelve patients have been submitted, but the estimated cost of carrying out these plans was such that the Committee did not feel justified in recommending their adoption. The Committee is now engaged in obtaining further information concerning Isolation Hospitals in other Districts which have been built at more reasonable cost.

I enclose Summary of proceedings taken during the past year, and also tabular statements of deaths and of infectious sickness, and have the honour to be

Gentlemen

Your obedient servant

C. A. Leachman

M. D. & D. P. H. (Camb.)

Medical Officer of Health.

Darley, Petersfield

2nd May 1898

Summary of Proceedings taken by the Medical Officer of Health in 1895

January 13th. Infant School visited. Of 196 children on the books 116 were absent from Whooping Cough or Measles. A letter was written to the Board recommending that the School should be closed and this was accordingly done on January 14th. The school was re-opened on March 1st.

March 3rd. A sample of water from a well supplying three cottages in the occupation of Mills Restall and Read respectively was examined and the premises inspected; a cesspool was found not far distant from the well which was said to be cleaned out at short intervals. The water, though not above suspicion, was not so decidedly bad as to warrant its being condemned as injurious to health.

March 22nd. Notification was received of a case of Diphtheria in one of the Cottages on the Board's Hill in the occupation of a family named Gale. Two fatal cases of this disease occurred in the same house in November 1895. The cottages were visited and found to be in an insanitary condition; the closet used by Gale was not in working order, the flush tank not having acted, it was reported, for three or four weeks. In consequence of a stoppage in the drain the closet of an adjoining cottage had overflowed three weeks before and the contents soaked into the ground and into a disused well, and the stench had been unbearable. The Sanitary Inspector was asked to take immediate steps to have the well, which appeared to be used as a receptacle for rubbish, filled up and the cistern put into working order. The children were ordered to be kept from school and no further case occurred.

May 5. The well at Cliff Cottage was inspected. The well was immediately outside the scullery door, not raised above the surface and covered with a stone uncemented; the having

bricks adjoining were loose so that the surface washings must penetrate into the well. The water showed no excess of Chlorides and was therefore probably only contaminated with the sinti water. A letter was written to the Council stating that the well, if used, must be raised 18 inches above the ground so as to prevent the entrance of scullery waste, but that the better plan would be to lay on the public water supply. This has since been done.

July 16th Well water from Boers' Farm was sent for examination being suspected of sewage contamination, owing to the proximity of a privy which was thirty feet distant. Examination showed no evidence of this